Media Contact: Andrew High 202-225-1784, andrew.high@mail.house.gov

June 8, 2012

"Two days ago, as the Fiscal Year 2013 Department of Homeland Security bill came to the floor for consideration, I applauded our Chairman for shepherding the bill before this body in a timely fashion and under an open rule. Collaboration and collegiality characterized our subcommittee and full committee deliberations on this bill, but sadly that cooperative spirit was overwhelmed in the closing hours of floor debate by the far right. The House adopted extreme and reckless amendments in a process that Republican leaders could not or would not control. Although I came into the debate planning to support the bill, these amendments tipped the scales. I could not support the bill on final passage, nor could the ranking member of the full committee and the vast majority of the Democratic Caucus.

"Particularly unacceptable were two amendments by Mr. King of Iowa. The first prohibited the use of funds to provide translation and interpretation services to those limited in their English proficiency. The second prohibited the use of Immigration and Customs Enforcement funds to finalize, implement, administer or enforce directives by ICE Director Morton that the agency target criminal aliens for removal, ahead of immigrants who have not committed violent acts in our communities.

"The first amendment breaks faith with all immigrant constituencies, damaging ICE's ability to communicate with individuals involved in immigration enforcement actions, their families and members of the community. The second amendment effectively reverses years of policy development, through two administrations, prioritizing the removal of criminal aliens. Aliens who have committed violent crimes have already shown they will do harm in our communities. Why would we not want ICE to prioritize them for removal first? These amendments pander to anti-immigrant sentiment, but they are not merely symbolic: they jeopardize the safety of our communities.

"A further amendment by Rep. Sullivan of Oklahoma prohibits the use of funds to terminate any 287(g) agreement in existence. The 287(g) program allows state and local law enforcement to partner with ICE, and acting on ICE's authority, carry out immigration enforcement functions. As

numerous Inspector General reports have indicated, the program is seriously flawed. To be clear: the Sullivan Amendment would prevent DHS from terminating partnerships with police departments that are shown to engage in racial profiling. Unbelievably, it also would also bar communities that wish to terminate their 287(g) programs from doing so. Rather than facilitating oversight, this amendment significantly impairs the Department's ability to mete out consequences to entities shown to be abusing the public trust or breaking the law. It has no place in this bill.

"Despite these failings, the bill would provide adequate funding for DHS front line employees to conduct critical operations along our borders; protect our nation's airports and seaports; disrupt the latest plots against the United States and our citizens; and respond to the spate of natural disasters our country has experienced.

"This year's bill also significantly increases funding for critical grant programs, in marked contrast to the current year's inadequate levels. Specifically, FEMA's State and Local grants are funded at $423 million above the fiscal year 2012 level, fire grants are funded at the 2012 level, and emergency management performance grants are funded at the requested levels. The bill also provides increased support for research and development efforts, another improvement from current funding levels.

"These strengths, however, were overcome on the floor. Months of bipartisan effort and work were swamped in just a few hours as Republicans accommodated and embraced amendments that I believe they would have had the courage and discipline to reject in previous congresses. The line was crossed. We must now attempt to repair the damage as the appropriations process continues."

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